

# Kingpin manages airpower over Iraq

By Senior Airmen **Bryan Franks**  
332nd AEW Public Affairs

When Soldiers and Marines call in an air strike on terrorists in Iraq, the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron tracks airpower and allocates airspace for the mission.

Kingpin, as the 727th EACS is more commonly known, is a forward deployed radar control and identification agency responsible for identifying all assets that fly in the 270,000 square miles of airspace over Iraq and prove airpower to support the democratic efforts on the ground.

The 727th EACS is deployed in three separate locations through the area of operations ensuring rapid identifications of all air traffic, tactical or civil, creating a real-time "air picture" that the Combined Air Operation Center uses to maintain control of tactical air assets, said Capt. Keven Coyle, 727th EACS deputy officer.

When a "Troops in Contact" or confrontation, with anti-Iraqi forces,

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Photo by Senior Airman Bryan Franks

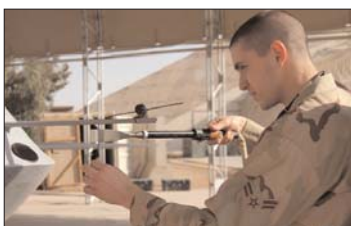
**Airman 1st Class Sam Hauptly cleans an antenna connection as Senior Airman Gil Stephens holds it in place. Both Airmen are deployed to the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron as ground radio technicians.**

## Top Chaplain visits AFTH



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## Keeping Predators flying



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## USO tour visits Balad



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Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Charles Baldwin, Chief, Air Force Chaplain Service, talks to Army Sgt. Michael Crosts, HHB 22nd Field Artillery Army, Ramadi, Iraq, at the Air Force Theater Hospital Dec. 24.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins

## Chief Chaplain visits AFTH

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Charles Baldwin, Chief, Air Force Chaplain Service, visits an Iraqi child who is being treated at the Air Force Theater Hospital for injuries from a insurgent mortar attack.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins

## COMMANDER'S ACTION LINE

As a service for Balad Airmen, the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing operates the Commander's Action Line program.

The line is a way for Balad Air Base members to get answers to questions or express concerns about life on the base. Brig. Gen. Frank Gorenc, 332nd AEW commander, gives action line queries his personal attention.

The *Red Tail Flyer* will publish those items that are judged to be of general interest to the Balad Air Base population. In addition to using the commander's action line, Balad Airmen are asked to remember their chain of command when dealing with problems and concerns. The Commander's Action Line can be reached via e-mail at [redtailflyer@blab.centaf.af.mil](mailto:redtailflyer@blab.centaf.af.mil).

Those using the action line should include name, unit and phone number in case additional information is needed and for a timely response.

**Brig. Gen. Frank Gorenc, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, greets Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, when he arrived at Balad Air Base Dec. 24.**

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing  
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<http://www.afnews.af.mil/iraq/baladarchive/current.pdf>



## Taking aim

Staff Sgt. Brian Ornstein, 64th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, positions a GAU-2B minigun while alert on a HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter.

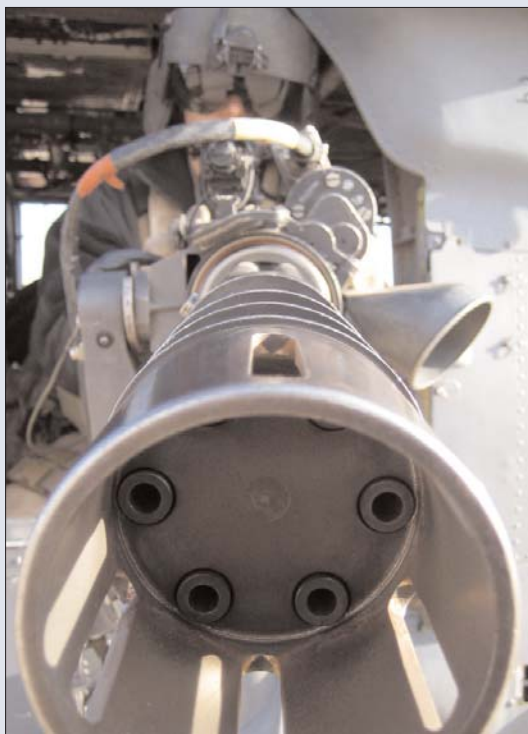


Photo by Staff Sgt. Andre Bell

# President calls Airman

By Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore  
332nd AEW Public Affairs

Despite that fact that all service members follow the orders of President George W. Bush, only a few have actually had a conversation with him.

Airman 1st Class Bryan Whitney is one Airman who can count himself in that number, after receiving a phone call from the President on Christmas Eve.

Assigned to the 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron as a gun truck operator, Airman Whitney has been serving in Iraq for four months.

When the call from the Commander in Chief came in, Airman Whitney had a smile on his face like a child opening an early Christmas present. The President and Airman Whitney talked about everything from hiking to the January military pay raise.

The President asked Airman Whitney to share a message with other service members.

He asked Airman Whitney to extend his Christmas greetings to everyone serving here.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

**Airman 1st Class Chad Whitney, 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, talks to President George W. Bush via speaker phone on Christmas Eve.**

The conversation was the highlight of Airman Whitney's deployment.

"It felt good to be able to talk to our boss," Airman Whitney said. "I was very surprised and honored to be chosen."

## BALAD AIR BASE NEWS NOTES

### Pinewood Derby

A Pinewood Derby is scheduled to be held from 7 to 11:30 p.m. today. Weigh-ins will be from 7 to 10 p.m. Racing starts at 10 p.m. For more information, call Master Sgt. Byron Workman at 443-7531.

### New Years Eve events

The H6 Recreation Tent is scheduled to host the following activities Saturday: Texas Hold 'em and an 8 Ball Tournament at 2 p.m.; Chess Tournament and Ping Pong at 3 p.m.; Risk and Battleship games at 4 p.m.; Spades and 9 Ball at 5 p.m.; and Progressive Bingo from 7 to 8 p.m.

### New Years Eve party

A Mardi Gras New Years Eve party is scheduled to be held Saturday at 8 p.m. in Town Hall.

### 5K run

The H6 Fitness Center has a 5K run scheduled for Sunday at 8 a.m. To sign up visit the H6 Fitness Center.

### USO tour visits Balad

A USO tour is scheduled to perform in the Sustainer Theater Sunday at 2 p.m. Performers include Diana DeGarmo, Reggie McFadden, Michael Peterson, Greg Anthony and Medal of Honor recipient (Ret.) Col. Jack Jacobs.

### Diamond Sharp awards

Congratulations to the most recent Diamond Sharp award winners: Senior Airman John Clark, 332nd Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; Senior Airman Melissa Kee, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron; Senior Airman Archie Galloway, 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron; Senior Airman Jennifer Swopes, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group; and Senior Airman James D'Angelo, 332nd Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron.

# Spending Christmas together

By Staff Sgt. **Tammie Moore**  
332nd AEW Public Affairs

Tech. Sgt. Craig Laubender was in a bit of a "bah humbug" mood when he arrived at work on Christmas Eve. He was feeling down about spending the holidays away from his family.

However, after checking his e-mail, the operator dispatcher for the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron's spirits were suddenly lifted. His son, a soldier also deployed to Iraq, was on a mission that would bring him to Balad for Christmas.

"When I heard about the mission that was opening up, I crossed my fingers and asked to go," said Army Private 1st Class Andy Laubender, 4th Infantry Division, Bravo Company Aviation Support Battalion. "Getting picked up for the mission was a huge morale boost."

The last time the father and son spent time together was more than a year ago, when Sergeant Laubender attended his son's technical school graduation.

"We had to travel more than 3,000 miles to see each other again," Sergeant Laubender said. "This is a holiday surprise I will never forget. I don't think I could have asked for a better Christmas present."

Private Laubender, a Blackhawk helicopter mechanic, agreed.

"I am happy I am here," he said. "I am glad to see my dad. It is a nice Christmas present, but it would have still been special no matter what time of the year it was."

While the Laubenders will not have their normal deep-fried Christmas turkey and 8-foot-tall Christmas tree, the two plan to make the best of the three days they will have together before Private Laubender's helicopter is scheduled to return to Camp Taji, Iraq.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

**Army Pfc. Andy Laubender, 4th Infantry Division, arrived at Balad Christmas Eve where he had a chance to spend the holiday with his father Tech. Sgt. Craig Laubender, 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron.**

"Andy arrived in time to come to our section Christmas party, so we will be having pizza and near-beer this evening while watching Christmas movies," Sergeant Laubender said. "After that, we will just spend our time catching up with one another."

Darlene, Sergeant Laubender's wife, was ecstatic when she heard the news.

"I was glad that the boys could spend Christmas together," Mrs. Laubender said.

Sergeant Laubender said, "Hopefully, next year we will get to spend holidays with the whole family together."

## *Surprise promotion to MSgt*

By Staff Sgt. **Tammie Moore**  
332nd AEW Public Affairs

Tech. Sgt. Hershel Deaton, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, received an early and unexpected Christmas present Dec. 22.

While at work the operations and plans NCO in-charge, received a phone call from Brig. Gen. Hawk Carlisle, 3rd Wing commander at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, his home station. After some chit-chat, General Carlisle announced Sergeant Deaton was receiving a Stripes for

Exceptional Performers promotion to master sergeant, as a few people from the 3rd Civil Engineering Squadron and his wife listened in.

"I was excited," Sergeant Deaton said. "It was a great day and a wonderful Christmas present."

According to Sergeant Deaton's nomination package, he represents the "whole person" concept. He is an inspiring leader, a member of Airman Against Drunk Driving and is pursuing his bachelor's degree.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

**Master Sgt. Hershel Deaton, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, received a Stripes for Exceptional Performers promotion Dec. 22.**

# Understanding redeployments

By **Capt. Mays** 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron and the Readiness Control Center

The time is around the corner when Airmen will begin out-processing Balad Air Base, departing the Redtail ranks and returning home. While preparing to redeploy stress levels can increase significantly, and the best way to reduce this stress is through communication and a understanding of the redeployment process.

It is natural to compare the redeployment process to commercial air travel because there are similarities and it is a process almost everyone is already familiar with. In reality, the Air Force operates similarly to commercial airlines but on a much larger scale and with many specific requirements. In order to maximize efficiency, Air Mobility Command's cell for planning strategic airlift, the Tanker Airlift Control Center, coordinates missions on a global scale. The TACC matches aircraft with requirements while de-conflicting country clearances and overseeing aerial port workloads to meet a strict movement timeline. The objective is to move people and cargo throughout the theater without disrupting military operations.

During unit and personnel rotation periods, TACC contracts additional airlift to meet the increased demand to move people from the theater. Most people will travel out of theater on a commercial carrier under contract with AMC. Then the Air Force deployed each of us they decided up front if the Airman will travel utilizing the area of responsibility daily channel missions or by a separate contracted flight. When deploying individuals are assigned a unit line number which is used to track positions and the people filling them.

Personnel selected to travel on routine channel missions are

coded as AC and those traveling on a specific contracted flight are coded AK. A majority of Air Force personnel at here will depart on AK missions.

The 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron serves as base-level planners and the conduit to pass this assignment information on to unit travel representatives. The UTR is the link to keeping their unit informed and ready to execute the redeployment.

As the redeployment process begins, personnel assemble with all their baggage at a central location where positive command and control of the redeploying group is established. A troop commander will be appointed and is typically the senior member of the redeploying group. The chalk then proceeds to base supply to retrieve weapons and then to out-process the Personnel Support for Contingency Operations office. The chalk is then transported to the passenger service terminal.

After chalk is manifested on a scheduled flight from Balad the customs clearance process will begin. This process can be lengthy, and it is not uncommon for customs agents to spend over 30 minutes per passenger. The customs agents must ensure personnel do not transport contraband, war trophies, materials or food out of Iraq. There is an amnesty box located at the entrance of the customs clearance facility for disposal of any prohibited items prior to entering the clearance process. Once the customs process begins, personnel with contraband items will be subject to Uniform Code of Military Justice action.

After completing the customs process, you will proceed to the sterile holding area. Once bags are checked and the flight manifested is complete, just sit back and wait for the flight to board.

## Helpful tips for reducing redeployment challenges

- ◆ Please don't throw away uniforms in an attempt to lighten your load. Individuals caught throwing away uniform items are subject to disciplinary actions. Supply has a drop box available to accept unservicable uniforms.
- ◆ Have all checklist items, with the exception of weapons pick-up and final Personnel Support for Contingency Operations out-processing, completed no later than three days before individual ready to load dates.
- ◆ After clearing your room, always keep unit travel representatives and supervisor informed where you will be. Make sure you can get back and be ready to go within a moments notice.
- ◆ Be on time at the pick up location. A missed movement is subject to punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- ◆ Do not pack personal items in your mobility bags.
- ◆ Do not attempt to travel with war trophies or other contraband items.
- ◆ Pack a small "bug-out bag" with a uniform and toiletries as a carry on.
- ◆ Bring something along to occupy your time such as books or walkman.
- ◆ Keep a copy of follow-on transportation information handy and know your follow-on mission number.
- ◆ Do not try to "game the system" by making impromptu travel arrangements.
- ◆ Remember redeployment is an art, not a science and maintaining flexibility will make the event less stressful.
- ◆ Carry a phone card with in case there are unscheduled travel deviations so your home station can be notified.
- ◆ Teamwork during baggage movements will ease out-processing stress.
- ◆ Don't break the baggage limit. Travelers are allowed two personnel bags 70 pounds each, their A, B and C mobility bags, one cased weapon and one carry-on bag not to exceed 45 linear inches or 22 inches by 9 inches by 14 inches. Bags that exceed carry on limits must be checked. Anything more must be mailed or will remain in Balad.





Photos by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

**Senior Airman Neal Eastwood, 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, uses a heating tool to secure a yaw string on a Predator. The pilot uses the yaw string to determine wind direction.**

## Keeping Predators flying, Balad safe

By Staff Sgt. **Tammie Moore**  
332nd AEW Public Affairs

Airmen from the 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit take great pride in ensuring Predator pilots at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., and Balad are able to continuously maintain an eagle's eyes view of the ground in Iraq.

The 61 U.S. and three Royal Air Force Airmen assigned to the 46th AMU work to guarantee their MQ-1 Predators are able to provide interdiction, surveillance, target acquisition and conduct armed reconnaissance against critical, perishable targets.

"The aircraft's ability to loiter over an area for a long period of time, strike targets and provide real time-video to our Soldiers on the front lines, operational commanders or world wide through satellite links is in high demand and keeps our technicians busy around the clock," said Maj. Joseph Giuliani, 46th AMU officer-in-charge.

The Airmen who come from a wide variety of specialties work in unison to reach one key objective — to make certain their Predators are prepared to function at 100 percent during aerial patrols, which frequently last more than 20 hours.

The 46th AMU is staffed with aircraft avionics, tactical aircraft maintenance, weapons, ground communication, aerospace ground equipment and support Airmen, Major Giuliani said.



**Airman 1st Class Frank Miklos, 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, writes down fuel verification numbers during a Predator flight turnover.**

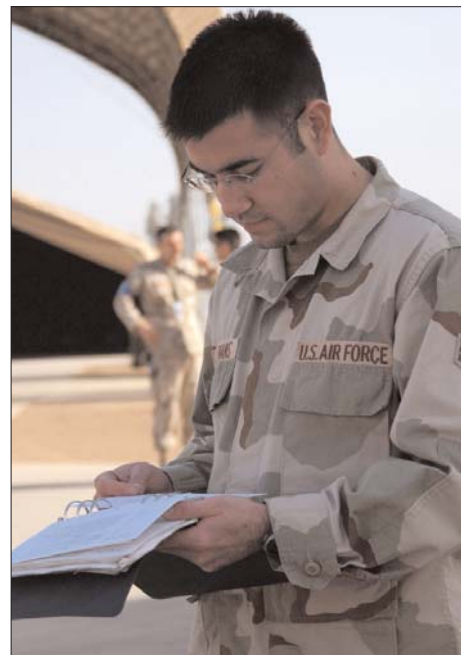
"These Airmen are responsible for the safe and effective launch and recovery, inspection, servicing and repair of our assigned remotely piloted aircraft."

All of the Airmen working at the 46th AMU have deployed

See Predator Page 7



(Left to right) Staff Sgt. Jwonn Wilson and Staff Sgt. Bryan Larry, both from the 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, remove a Hellfire Missile from a Predator after it returned from a mission so aircraft maintenance can be performed.



Senior Airman Anthony Clemans, 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, reviews a Predator technical order prior to conducting maintenance.

#### Predator, from Page 6

here from Creech Air Force Base, Nev. Some of the Airmen have been here before and others are serving at Balad for the first time.

This unit does not fall under the normal air and space expeditionary force rotation cycle, Major Giuliani said. Predators are low density, high demand assets. Creech is the only base sending Airmen to fill this role. So some of the Airmen deploy twice during a 15 month cycle.

Working in a deployed environment has brought a new perspective to first-time deployer Airman 1st Class Rachael Hillman, 46th AMU avionics technician.

"I have learned a lot already about my job and what the plane does," Airman Hillman said. "I had to adjust to the atmosphere and the amount of maintenance that goes on here, compared to back home."

Predators require more maintenance in deployed locations, because the missions keep them flying for longer periods of time.

Flowing-out the aircraft maintenance to ensure a Predator is available to fly when scheduled is the most challenging part of this job, Major Giuliani said. Because lives can depend on the presence of a Predator, it is important that every aircraft gets off the ground to perform the scheduled missions.

"We are very connected with what is happening on the ground outside of the base and the impact we have on that," Major Giuliani said. "If we can't get an aircraft in the air, it can directly impact other forces on the ground who are counting on us."

Despite the long hours of maintenance work the 46th AMU, Airmen feel rewarded from the job they do.

"I enjoy seeing the role of the Predator in a wartime environ-



Senior Airman Chris Thompson, 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, prepares to refuel a Predator.

ment and what it can do," said Senior Airman Chris Thompson, 46th AMU avionics technician, deployed to Balad for the third time. "It feels good knowing that my job is directly linked to keeping the base safe and taking out the 'bad guys!'"

Airman Hillman said, "Watching a Predator you just worked on fly off to conduct a mission that could save someone's life is a very rewarding feeling."

The pride felt by those in the 46th AMU has had an impact on the unit's leadership.

"Seeing the satisfaction our troops get from their job and knowing that their efforts are helping to bring democracy to Iraq has meant a lot to me," Major Giuliani said.

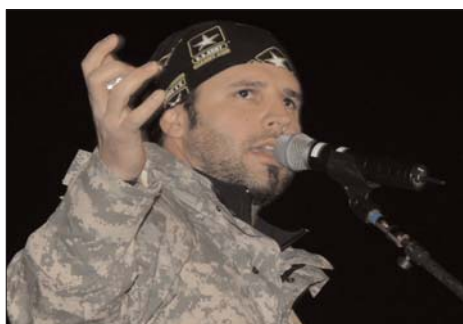


# USO tour travels to Balad

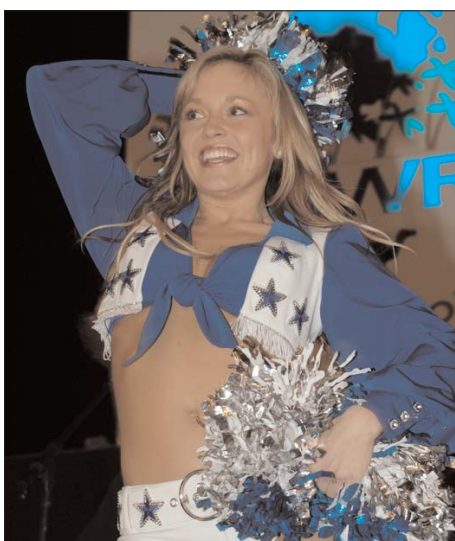


Photos by Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins

Rachael Washington, Soul Jahz lead vocalist, sings to the men and women serving at Balad Air Base and Logistical Support Area Anaconda.



(Above) Country signer Mark Wills, greets Soldiers and Airmen in attendance at the Sergeant Major of the Army's Hope & Freedom Tour.



(Above) Country signer Keni Thomas performs at Holt Stadium, Dec. 23, during the Sergeant Major of the Army's Hope & Freedom Tour.

(Left) Lynelee Allen, a Dallas Cowboy cheerleader, strikes a pose which made service members in the crowd snap to attention, Dec. 23.



# Mortar attack doesn't deter Balad Airman

By Maj. Robert Couse-Baker  
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing public affairs

Staff Sgt. Amer Kawasmi's fourth trip to Iraq would not be so noteworthy if it were not for how abruptly his third rotation ended.

At about 3 a.m. July 28, 2005, while walking back to his room in the housing complex, a mortar exploded less than two meters from him.

Paramedics and co-workers administered first aid and Sergeant Kawasmi was rushed to the Air Force Theater Hospital for surgery to remove shrapnel.

Later that afternoon Brig. Gen. Frank Gorenc, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, presented a Purple Heart to Sergeant Kawasmi while the 28-year-old avionics specialist was awaiting aeromedical evacuation to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

After returning to duty with the 57th Wing at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Sergeant Kawasmi asked to redeploy on the next rotation to Balad.

As the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit specialist flight, Sergeant Kawasmi is once again keeping the MQ-1 Predator



Courtesy photo

**In July Brig. Gen. Frank Gorenc, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, shakes hands with Staff Sgt. Amer Kawasmi, 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, after presenting him a Purple Heart. Sergeant Kawasmi was injured by a mortar attack. Despite his injuries, Sergeant Kawasmi has returned to the Balad Predator unit for his fourth deployment.**

unmanned aerial vehicles in the sky.

"It feels good to be back. This is where the mission takes place," he said.

Originally from Arlington, Texas, the soft spoken Airman had to reassure his dad back home about volunteering for another rotation.

"This is what I want to do," Sergeant

Kawasmi told his family.

Despite the risks, he said working in the deployed environment is the best part of the job. With 10 years experience, Sergeant Kawasmi believes the Air Force is his career and hopes for many more opportunities to deploy with the mission.

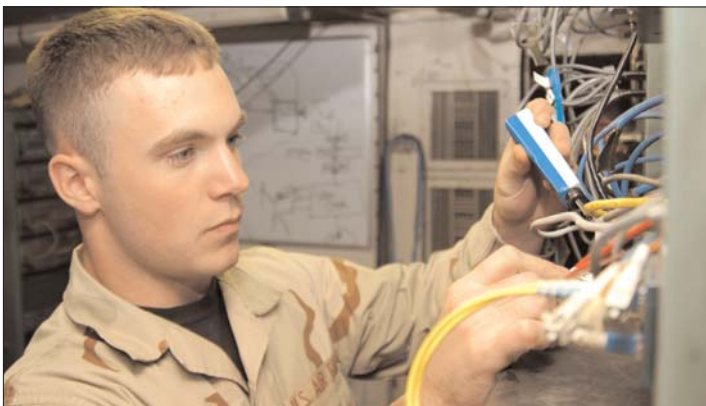


Photo by Senior Airman Bryan Franks

**Airman 1st Class Josh Greene, 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, checks the wires on one of the systems in the Kingpin communications tent.**

EACS, from Page 1

forces, occurs Kingpin Airmen work directly with the Air Support Operations Center to send airborne fighter assets to support TIC.

Kingpin also establishes mission airspace to all manner of tactical aircraft including UAVs, tankers, fighters and electronic

warfare assets, Captain Coyle said. The unit disseminates tactical guidance to and from the CAOC and prioritizes the allocation of airborne fuel and tankers when tactically needed.

"There are special considerations, such as, how much is too much airspace to take at any one time," Captain Coyle said. "Our number one priority is supporting the tactical mission. We are fighting a war here, but we must take into account the needs of all airspace users and provide a means for safe deconfliction and timely response."

More than 170 Airmen from various career fields deploy to keep Kingpin running.

"We are a self-sustaining organization that deploys with everything we need to operate and survive," said Tech. Sgt. John Palmer, 727th EACS. "Our maintenance function keeps our \$60 million complexes running like a finely tuned machine."

The Airmen cover the entire scope of maintenance functions: power generation and maintenance, heating ventilation and air conditioning, vehicle maintenance, supply, radar maintenance, satellite communications, network operations, radio maintenance, technical control, digital systems maintenance and a variety of maintenance support functions to accomplish the mission, Sergeant Palmer said.



# Bonfire sparks holiday spirit

Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

(Left to right) Master Sgt. Hayden Pickett, 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, roasts marshmallows as Capt. Liza Theriault, 732nd Expeditionary Mission Support Group, enjoys the warmth of the fire.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

Tech. Sgt. Kimberly Bledsaw, 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, places marshmallows on a stick, so she can make herself some s'mores at the Balad holiday bonfire Dec. 22.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shannon Kluge

Members of the Tuskegee Praise Team, lead by Chaplain (Maj.) Carl Wright, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group chaplain, sing holiday songs.



# 'Quality of work' evolves at Balad

By Capt. **David Carlson**  
332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron

The term "quality of work" can mean different things to different people. Some may consider the term "quality of work" to mean the results of their day-to-day job efforts and how well they do their job. Others may consider "quality of work" to mean what type of jobs they do during the day — some jobs are very enjoyable and rewarding while others may be far less enjoyable.

The definition of "quality of work" that we use within the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron pertains to the quality of the work environment that people work in on a day-to-day basis. Working in an office that is not overcrowded and has adequate temperature control and lighting is considered an appropriate work environment. Having a good work environment is essential to mission success — especially considering that most of us spend more time at work than anywhere else.

During a typical deployment the "quality of work" changes.

When we first hit the ground on a bare base, the "quality of work" is generally poor. People live and work out of tents which may or may not have heating and/or air conditioning. People use Harvest Falcon latrines, porta potties and possibly expedient latrine trenches. Showers and laundry facilities may or may not be available. AM-2 matting or gravel is used for parking areas, roads and storage pads.

As time goes on we transition from these bare base conditions. Tents are replaced by climate controlled trailers. Cadillac latrine facilities replace expedient latrines. Showers and laundry facilities are made available.

**“ While it might not make sense fiscally and operationally to replace all expeditionary assets, we are doing our best to make these changes where possible and appropriate. ”**

- Capt. **David Carlson**  
332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron

We are working to complete the transition from tents, porta potties, AM-2 matting and gravel at Balad. Our goal is to transition to more of an expeditionary standard of operation — and the "quality of work" needs to follow suit.

Tents should be replaced with trailers. Groups of trailers should be replaced with semi-permanent facilities. Porta potties should be replaced with Cadillac latrines. AM-2 matting and gravel should be replaced with concrete or asphalt. While it might not make sense fiscally and operationally to replace all expeditionary assets, we are doing our best to make these changes where possible and appropriate.

You can help us continue to complete this transition by identifying areas where your "quality of work" could be improved.

If you find any such areas, please run your request through your chain of command and then submit an Air Force Form 332 to the 332nd ECES customer service desk in building 4100. For more information, call 443-8128.

We will continue to strive to make everyone's "quality of work" as good as possible within fiscal and operational constraints.

## Muffler clamp

(Left to right) Staff Sergeants Don Gerhart and Staff Sgt. Darnell Roberts tighten a muffler clamp on a case backhoe. Both Airmen are deployed to the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

# Last night I met a hero

By Maj. **Mark Rasnake**  
332nd Expeditionary Medical Group

I met a hero last night. I did not realize it at the time, but he is the closest thing to a hero that I likely will ever meet. This is a place where the word "hero" is tossed around day in and day out, so much so that you sometimes lose sight of its true meaning. His story reminded me of it.

He was commanding a Bradley fighting vehicle that was struck with a roadside bomb, catching fire. The loading ramp jammed, trapping eight inside. The crew was forced to escape through a much smaller hatch in the top of the vehicle. All but one made it out. The medic was left behind, apparently unable to get out. Without concern for his own life, my hero went back in to the burning vehicle to retrieve his friend.

Six of his buddies came to us with severe burns. He came to us with burns over most of his body, the most severely injured of the group.

The surgeons worked for hours on his wounds and we worked for hours in the intensive care unit to stabilize him for transport. In the end, damage to his lungs made him too sick to be safely transported by plane to our hospital in Germany and then to a burn center in San Antonio.

The ventilators we use for transport

simply could not deliver the amount of oxygen he needed. If he stayed here in Iraq, he would have died of his wounds. We simply cannot care for such severe burns here. Only a handful of hospitals back in the U.S. can.

Knowing this, our air evac team loaded him into the plane for the six-hour flight to Germany. They had to deliver every breath to him during that flight by hand squeezing a small bag. I do not know yet if he made it to Germany alive.

Back home there is a bridge named for Sergeant Elbert Kinser. My grandfather told me the story about why the bridge was named for him. It came to my mind this morning. He was fighting alongside his buddies, when the enemy threw a grenade into their ranks. Rather than attempt to run to escape the danger he threw himself on the grenade, saving the lives of his comrades. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his gallantry, and the town named a bridge after him.

This is the story as I remember it being told to me. The details may be wrong. There is a memorial at the end of the bridge that tells Sergeant Kinser's actual story. Honestly, I do not think I have ever stopped to read it.

How many people drive across that bridge every day without ever wondering

why it has its name? How many ever stop at the large parking area in front of the memorial to read the story of this man's last minutes on earth? How many of his friends are still alive to remember the story? How many grew old and had grandchildren because of his sacrifice? Did they thank him every day of their lives? The next time I cross that bridge I will stop for just a few minutes of my life to read about a man who gave all of his.

People use the word "hero" too much. We have cheapened it. We use it to describe football players and politicians. We even use it derisively at times to describe people we think are being too eager or self-promoting. It is even thrown about too cheaply over here when people describe groups of us just doing our jobs as "American Heroes."

Most of us will serve our time here with pride without ever truly earning that title. The man I met last night deserves to be called Hero. Years from now, will anyone remember what he did last night?

I have said it before and will say it again. It is a privilege to be here taking care of these troops. Are they all heroes? They certainly are more so than any athlete at home will ever be. There is a higher standard though, even here. I was honored by seeing him in person last night.

## BALAD AIR BASE UNIFORM TIPS

The wear of an issued desert-colored scarf or triangular bandanna (brown or tan) loosely around the neck as a sweat rag or to protect the face and neck during sandstorm against the sand and sun is authorized. For additional guidelines on scarf and bandanna wear see 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Instruction 36-2903 [Dress and Personal Appearance Standards] section two.

## Balad AB Religious Schedule

### Protestant - Traditional

Sundays  
9:30 a.m. Provider Chapel, 10 a.m. Freedom Chapel, 5:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

### Protestant - Gospel

Sundays  
11 a.m. - Sustainer Indoor Theater, 11:30 Freedom Chapel, 7 p.m. - Provider Chapel

### Protestant- Praise and Worship

Sundays  
9:30 a.m. Sustainer Indoor Theater, 6:30 p.m. Moral and Warfare Recreation Tent 29th SPT BN  
Sundays and Wednesdays  
7 p.m. Freedom Chapel

### Protestant - Contemporary

Sundays  
10 a.m. 299th FSB Tent Chapel, 11 a.m. Town Hall

### Latter Day Saints

Sundays  
1p.m. Provider Chapel, 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

### Liturgical- Protestant

Sundays

7:30 a.m. Hospital, 8 a.m. Provider Chapel  
Samoan Congregational Service

Sundays

4 p.m. Provider Chapel

### Roman Catholic Mass

Mondays through Fridays

7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

Saturdays

5 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel (4:45 p.m. Reconciliation)

Sundays

8:30 a.m. Freedom Chapel, 9 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel, 11 a.m. Provider Chapel, 3:30 p.m. "626" Chapel (for Special Ops personnel only)

### Church of Christ

Sunday

2 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

### Islamic Prayer

Fridays

1:30 p.m. Provider Chapel

### Jewish Prayer

Fridays

6:30 p.m. Provider Chapel Annex



## Know what this is?



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

If you can identify the object, send us an e-mail at [redtailflyer@blab.centaf.af.mil](mailto:redtailflyer@blab.centaf.af.mil). Last week's photo was first identified by Army Sgt. Carlos Colon, 311th Quartermaster Company, as Santa's hat.



Courtesy photo

## Silent Heroes

Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins, 332nd Expeditionary Communications Squadron, is this week's "Silent Hero." He is a true professional who remains in the background while capturing the essence of the Tuskegee Wing, said Command Chief Master Sgt. Layton Clark, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing command chief.

# Sustainer movie schedule

Schedule is subject to change



### Today

3 p.m. - In Her Shoes  
6 p.m. - King Kong (*Premiere showing*)  
9 p.m. - King Kong  
Midnight - King Kong

### Saturday, Dec. 31

3 p.m. - The Gospel  
6 p.m. - Domino  
9 p.m. - King Kong  
Midnight - King Kong

### Sunday, Jan. 1

2 p.m. - USO show  
6 p.m. - King Kong  
9 p.m. - King Kong

### Monday, Jan. 2

3 p.m. - King Kong  
6 p.m. - History of Violence  
9 p.m. - The Gospel

### Tuesday, Jan. 3

3 p.m. - Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit  
6 p.m. - King Kong  
9 p.m. - Domino

### Wednesday, Jan. 4

3 p.m. - In Her Shoes  
6 p.m. - Elizabethtown  
9 p.m. - King Kong

### Thursday, Jan. 5

3 p.m. - The Gospel  
6 p.m. - King Kong  
9 p.m. - History of Violence

